



## Original Biscocho Haus eyes Visayas expansion

JARO, ILOILO CITY — Iloilo-based Original Biscocho Haus, a longstanding name in the region's *pasalubong* (souvenir) market, is stepping up its expansion in Western Visayas, building on almost five decades of local brand recognition.

Founded in 1975 in the home of Teresa J. Guadarrama in Jaro, Iloilo, the bakery began as a family venture to support the education of the Guadarrama children.

Using day-old bread, butter, sugar and home kitchen tools, the business gradually grew from a sideline into a regional brand.

"Biscocho Haus is a product of my mother's entrepreneurial spirit," Jose Gerardo "Gerry" J. Guadarrama, the 67-year-old managing director and one of the owners, said in an interview at the family's ancestral home in Jaro district last month. "She was always into something. She had sidelines all over the place."

Today, Original Biscocho Haus operates 25 branches and kiosks across Western Visayas. The company, incorporated in 2003 as Original Biscocho Haus Corp., is adding three more locations in Metropolitan Iloilo, including sites at terminal and central markets, and is building a branch in another district.

Expansion into Antique province is also planned, broadening its reach in the region.

Mr. Guadarrama, the sixth of eight children, said the company is deliberately keeping its focus

local. Unlike other provincial brands, Original Biscocho Haus does not plan to enter Metro Manila, aiming instead to preserve its identity as a "*pasalubong* center."

"If our products are available at supermarkets or stands [in Manila], would you still come here?" he asked. "We don't want to become a commodity."

The brand's signature product, Biscocho — day-old bread toasted with butter and sugar — remains the top seller.

Daily production reaches about 36,000 pieces, or about 2,000 packs. Original Biscocho Haus maintains the original recipe, avoiding cheaper substitutes to preserve flavor.

The company has combined traditional methods with efficiency improvements to maintain what Mr. Guadarrama calls "upper-class quality for pedestrian pricing," a strategy credited to his engineering and accounting background.

Original Biscocho Haus has also embraced digital trends, rolling out credit card payments and online delivery services to meet evolving consumer behavior.

The strategy appears to be paying off. In 2025, the company posted annual sales growth of as much as 10%.

With further expansion in key regional markets, Original Biscocho Haus aims to strengthen its dominance in Western Visayas while keeping the brand rooted in its hometown identity. — **Edg Adrian A. Eva**

# Pampanga startup transforms deadstock into reusable pads

By Almira Louise S. Martinez  
Reporter

A PAMPANGA-BASED startup is turning to excess textiles to address one of the country's most persistent waste problems: disposable menstrual pads.

Ecopad Gaia produces reusable sanitary pads made from deadstock fabrics sourced in Taytay, Rizal, aiming to curb plastic waste and offer an alternative for women with sensitive skin.

"A woman, from the beginning of her period until the end of her period, when she's about to menopause, uses around 11,000 to 12,000 pads," founder Adeline P. Bondoc said in an interview. "Imagine, each woman uses 11,000 to 12,000 pads that take 500 to 800 years to decompose in landfills, in our waterways."

Most commercial pads are composed largely of plastic, which Ms. Bondoc said could break down into microplastics that contaminate the environment.

"When it becomes microplastic, it could be in our airways, we could drink it, we could swallow it, and we could eat it," she said. "It's a problem that can be passed on to the next generation if we don't do something today."

In 2025, Greenpeace Philippines said Filipino scientists had confirmed the presence of microplastics in water, air and soil across the country, warning that contamination threatens food security.

The World Bank estimated in 2021 that the Philippines generates about 2.7 million tons of plastic waste each year, with roughly 20% ending up in the ocean.

Founded in 2021, Ecopad Gaia was born out of Ms. Bondoc's personal experience with rashes from disposable pads.



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She said many women, including those with polycystic ovary syndrome, suffer irritation but do not speak up.

The company offers five types of cloth pads: a seven-inch pantyliner for daily use, a nine-inch pantyliner for spotting and menstrual cup users, a 10-inch pad for light flow, and 11-inch and 12-inch pads for heavier flow.

Pantyliners and light-flow pads are made from woven cotton lined with water-resistant fabric. Heavy-flow variants use cotton velour with Wind Pro fabric, commonly used in winter jackets overseas.

Users are advised to change pads every three to four hours. "If it's full, it will come out on the sides, so before it's full, change to avoid bacterial growth," Ms. Bondoc said.

Each pad can last up to three years with proper care. After

use, it can be soaked to remove stains and washed with regular laundry.

Since launch, the company has sold about 40,000 pads through partnerships with nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and e-commerce platforms.

This year, it aims to produce 36,000 pads through NGO and corporate social responsibility partnerships in Pampanga, as it shifts focus from retail to institutional buyers.



PHILIPPINE STAR/WALTER BOLLOZOS

STRONG WAVES hit the shore in Dingalan, Aurora amid a storm surge from Typhoon Uwan in this file photo.

### Credit risk, from S1/1

Out of the 119 countries analyzed, 60 countries, including the Philippines, were at risk of a credit rating downgrade due to issues arising from climate concerns.

Physical risks include heatwaves and wildfires, droughts, storms, floods and landslides, and a rise in sea levels.

Meanwhile, transition risks pertain to fossil fuel dependence or the exposure of major fossil fuel producers to a projected decline in global demand for fossil fuels as well as green energy costs or the cost of de-carbonization.

Based on the debt watcher's Climate.VS, the Philippines scored 55 out of 100 in terms of overall physical risk (VSp).

A VSp of 50 means Fitch Ratings could bring the country's credit rating one notch lower.

Fitch Ratings last affirmed its "BBB" long-term foreign currency issuer default rating and "stable" outlook for the Philippines in April last year.

A "stable" outlook means the Philippines will likely maintain its rating in the next 18 to 24 months.

The Philippines usually encounters about 20 storms yearly due its proximity to the Pacific Ocean, according to the state weather bureau Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

In 2025, 23 typhoons hit the country, affecting millions of Filipinos and leaving billions of pesos worth of damage nationwide.

Fitch's Mr. Parker said such climate risks could disrupt the local agriculture sector, potentially causing food prices and overall inflation to spike.

"Public expenditure aimed at mitigating some of the effects could also add to budget deficits, other things equal," he added.

Considering this, the country should invest in flood control and disaster preparedness initiatives to ensure the economy has adequate buffers against climate-related risks, Mr. Parker noted.

"Investment in infrastructure such as sea and flood defenses in critical areas and in disaster preparedness capacity can help countries to mitigate some of the impact of physical climate risks," he said. "They can also help to adapt to physical risks through careful consideration of planning, development and land use."

Last year, extensive flooding revealed substandard or nonexistent flood control projects across the country. These practices were later linked to Public Works officials, lawmakers and contractors who allegedly received kickbacks from the government's infrastructure program.

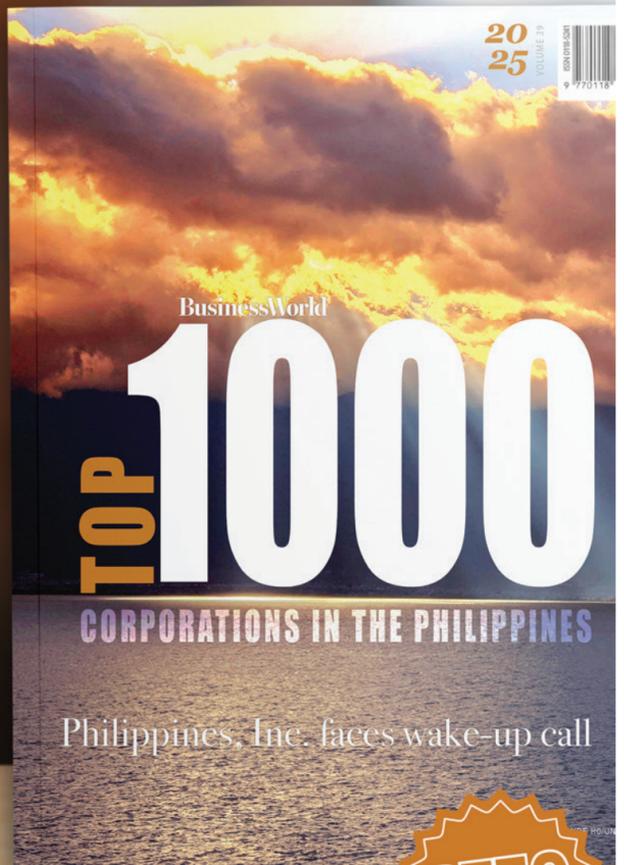
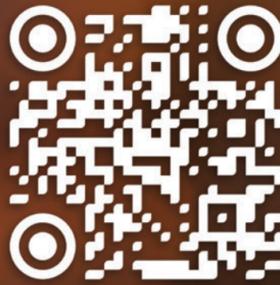
Fitch Ratings earlier told this paper that the graft scandal also risks the Philippines' credit rating due to its impact on political stability, fiscal policy implementation, as well as business and consumer confidence.

PAGASA expects four to 11 tropical cyclones to hit the country until July this year, with zero to one storm monthly until April and one to two each in May and June.

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